

Revelation 17

False Religious System

- **Intro:**

- Babylon—the source of so many heathen and pagan religions is here seen in its final judgment.
 - Babylon is seen in its religious character climaxing in a world religion.
 - Represented: as a Harlot
 - Roots: Babylon
 - Reign: world wide
 - Ruin: destroyed by the anti-Christ
 - Replaced: by anti-Christ worship

- **Historic Background.**

The Bible is full of information about Babylon as the source of false religion, the record beginning with the building of the tower of Babel (Gen. 10-11). The name "Babel" suggests "confusion" (Gen. 11:9). Later the name was applied to the city of Babylon which itself has a long history dating back to as early as 3,000 years before Christ. One of its famous rulers was Hammurabi (1728-1686 B.C.). After a period of decline Babylon again rose to great heights under Nebuchadnezzar about 600 years before Christ. Nebuchadnezzar's reign (605-562 B.C.) and the subsequent history of Babylon is the background of the Book of Daniel.

Babylon was important not only politically but also religiously. Nimrod, who founded Babylon (Gen. 10:8-12), had a wife known as Semiramis who founded the secret religious rites of the Babylonian mysteries, according to accounts outside the Bible. Semiramis had a son with an alleged miraculous conception who was given the name Tammuz and in effect was a false fulfillment of the promise of the seed of the woman given to Eve (Gen. 3:15).

Various religious practices were observed in connection with this false Babylonian religion, including recognition of the mother and child as God and of creating an order of virgins who became religious prostitutes. Tammuz, according to the tradition, was killed by a wild animal and then restored to life, a satanic anticipation and counterfeit of Christ's resurrection. Scripture condemns this false religion repeatedly (Jer. 7:18; 44:17-19, 25; Ezek. 8:14). The worship of Baal is related to the worship of Tammuz.

After the Persians took over Babylon in 539 B.C., they discouraged the continuation of the mystery religions of Babylon. Subsequently the Babylonian cultists moved to Pergamum (or Pergamos) where one of the seven churches of Asia Minor was located (cf. Rev. 2:12-17). Crowns in the shape of a fish head were worn by the chief priests of the Babylonian cult to honor the fish god. The crowns bore the words "Keeper of the Bridge," symbolic of the "bridge" between man and Satan. This handle was adopted by the Roman emperors, who used the Latin title *Pontifex Maximus*, which means "Major Keeper of the Bridge." And the same title was later used by the bishop of Rome. The pope today is often called the *pontiff*, which comes from pontifex. When the teachers of the Babylonian mystery religions later moved from Pergamum to Rome, they were influential in paganizing Christianity and were the source of many so-called religious rites which have crept into ritualistic churches. Babylon then is the symbol of apostasy and blasphemous substitution of idol-worship for the worship of God in Christ. In this passage Babylon comes to its final judgment. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

I. The Great Harlot Is Described.

- The woman symbolizes the false religious system.
 - Rev. 2:20 (thyatyra) because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.
- Many waters: v. 15
 - This indicates that there will be one ecumenical world religious system, embracing all nations and languages.
- Hordome is false worship.

1. Beast.

A. Seven heads and ten horns.

1. This is the revived Roman empire along with the anti-Christ.
2. Rev. 13:1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.
3. Dan 7

B. The woman is *sitting* on the beast.

1. The false religious system is carried by the antichrist & the Roman empire.

2. Woman.

A. Full of names of blasphemy.

1. What was the blasphemous religion of Rome?
 - a. Roman Catholicism!
2. Catholic doctrine.
 - a. Claiming to be vicors of Christ and representatives of God on the earth.

B. The woman was arrayed in...

1. This speaks of exaltation and prominence of this religious system.
2. Her abominations in a golden cup: false religion in a precious vessel.

C. MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

1. Mentioned or referred to 287 times in the scriptures.

2. Genesis 10:8-10 Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. [9] He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord." [10] And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.
 - a. Genesis 11:4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."
 - b. Babel: confusion
 - c. Bab-el: gate of God
3. Refer to introduction on Babylon.
 - a. 1Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

D. Drunk with the blood of the saints.

1. The apostate church will attempt to kill all those who follow the true faith.
2. The apostate religious system seems to be devoid of any true Christians.
 - a. John expressed his great astonishment at this revelation.
 - b. Six-million believers were martyred by Rome in the first 200 yrs of church history.

II. Great Harlot Described.

1. The beast who was and is not and yet is. (explain in verse 10) ?
 - A. This could be speaking of the anti-Christ.
 1. Rev. 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.
 2. Rev. 13:12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.
2. Seven mountains upon which the woman sits. (Rome)
 - A. "Throughout its history Rome has ben described as the city of seven hills as indicated in coins which refer to it in this way and in countless allusions in Roman literature." (Walvord)

1. Seven hills formed the nucleus of the ancient city (Rome) on the left bank of the Tiber river
2. This passage is taken to mean that the seat of religious power will be in Rome.
(Walvord)
 - a. Not literally Babylon. (Walvord)

3. Seven Kings.

- A. Some commentators explain the seven kings to be seven literal roman emperors, others believe it them to refer to seven forms of Roman government. Others say the kings refer to seven world powers: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persa, Greece, Rome, and the revived Roman Empire.
- B. When John wrote the book 5 major emperors that had passed from the seen.
 - 1.
 2. Cesar Nero could be the Anti-Christ.
 - a. He began well but went insane latter on in life.
 - b. He burned Rome and blamed it on the Christians.
 - c. The same demon that possessed Nero could be incarcerated in the bottomless pit.
 3. Rev. 11:7 The beast that *ascends out of the bottomless* pit will make war against them (two witnesses), overcome them, and kill them.
 4. 2Thes. 2:3 ...the man of sin, the son of *perdition*.

4. Ten kings.

- A. Future kings of the revived empire
- B. Ten kings will hate the harlot.
 1. Though the false religious system will be in harmony with the Anti-Christ for the first half of the tribulation period he will turn on them.
 - a. When the Anti-Christ takes on worldwide political power, he will also assume the place of God and demand that everyone worship him or else be killed.
 - b. 2 Thes. 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.
 - c. Rev. 13:15 ...as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

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2. The world church movement, which characterizes the first half of the seven years leading up to the Second Coming, is thus brought to an abrupt end. It will be replaced by the final form of world religion which will be the worship of the world ruler, Satan's substitute for Christ.